



THE BOARD REPORT



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The following is a summary of the May 7 and June 4, 2003, meetings of the State Board of Education.

SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PRACTICES: IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS Joel Barlow High School, Regional School District No. 9

Dr. Allen Fossbender, Principal of Joel Barlow High School, serving students from the towns of Easton and Redding, explained his school's approach to teaching writing and how the school is addressing noticeable gaps in performance between girls and boys. "Writing is taken very seriously at Barlow," Dr. Fossbender noted. "As a graduation requirement, all students, in January of their junior year, must submit a portfolio of their best writing. The final portfolio results are recorded on their transcripts." Dr. Fossbender summarized several supports in place to help students do well, including the assistance of three resource room faculty members who provide technical assistance to students throughout the school day. Students receive written comments on their portfolios, which are intended as a learning tool. In addition, the school employs two paraprofessionals who assist with non-teaching duties, thereby allowing teachers additional time to spend teaching. Another resource provided to all students is the *Student Writing Tools* booklet, which contains an overview of the school's writing program, the writing process, how to format various types of documents (resume, essay, letter, etc.), proofreading techniques and proper use of punctuation.

Dr. Fossbender stated that students benefit greatly from viewing concrete samples of what is considered to be good-quality writing. Several resources were developed to inform students what is expected of them and how to improve their writing. The "Diagnostic Writing Rubric," for example, provides teachers, parents and students with information about what skills warrant classification in any one of six specific levels of achievement. This is further broken down into performance levels for each of six parts of writing: thinking (development of ideas); organization (clarity and logic); content (supporting details); sentence structure (variety and quality of sentences); language (effective variety, figurative language, dialogue); and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization and paragraphing). To illustrate the assessment levels, the school provides parents and students with the *Book of Writing Models*. This publication contains selected samples of writing for each level of performance. The graduation standard is level 4, "effective," but the school aspires to ensure that all students reach level 5, "commendable," by the time they graduate.

In reviewing school data, it became evident that girls outperformed boys on writing skills, Dr. Fossbender stated. Girls tend to be more process oriented and somewhat more compliant in terms of pre-writing exercises than boys, he explained. In response to this observation, the school has worked toward accommodating individual learning styles and values respect for the diversity of students' abilities and interests. Avenues available to address individual learning preferences include independent studies, internships, senior projects, adjusted school schedules and online courses. Further, transition teams work with Grade 8 students and their parents to better prepare them for entry to high school. For further information about Joel Barlow High School's writing program, please contact Dr. Allen Fossbender at 203-938-2508.

Commissioner Sergi Announces Retirement

Commissioner of Education Theodore S. Sergi announced his retirement to the Board. The Board recognized Dr. Sergi for his 26 years of service to the State of Connecticut. Chairman Toensing noted, "It is with deep regret that we accept Commissioner Sergi's retirement. Under his leadership, Connecticut has made significant strides in improving student achievement, enhancing opportunities for students from preschool through adult education, and closing the achievement gaps. He has established a strong foundation for continued success, and we certainly will miss his leadership." Commissioner Sergi will serve as interim commissioner as the Board conducts a search for his successor.

SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PRACTICES: PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Middletown, New Haven and Hartford

The State Board of Education has focused on the importance of preschool education in preparing children for their K-12 schooling experience. The Board's *Position Statement on Preschool Programs and Services* (September 2002) endorses the expansion and enhancement of preschool programs and services, and describes its commitment toward ensuring that all of the state's preschool children are afforded an opportunity to receive a quality preschool education. In January 2003, the Board proposed to the Office of Policy and Management a 10 percent budget increase in each of the next 10 years to support universal access to high-quality preschool, based on parent and community ability to pay. In addition, at the Board's June 2003 meeting, three districts were invited to share with the Board their ideas about what works and what is needed to implement quality preschool education.

Middletown

Superintendent of Middletown Public Schools Carol Parmelee Blancato described strong collaborative efforts between the public and private sector in addressing the preschool needs of Middletown's children. Middletown provides several options to parents of preschool youngsters: public, nonpublic, private nonprofit, private for-profit, community college-based and YMCA-based preschool programs. Superintendent Blancato emphasized the importance of working in partnership with community social service agencies. Families require support in the areas of parent education, adult education, health services and employment opportunities. Toward this end, Middletown has established partnerships with 10 community agencies in the city.

Chris Fahey, Chair of Middletown's School Readiness Council, told the Board that the council relies on Connecticut's curriculum frameworks to ensure consistency in the quality of early childhood programs – for both public and private programs. All

programs receiving funds must receive accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Regular evaluations are conducted, and data are provided to programs to assist in identifying strengths and remedying weaknesses regarding professional development needs, materials and facilities. The Council regards the quality of teachers as a key factor in determining a program's effectiveness and, in cooperation with Middlesex Community College, has developed staff training programs based on identified needs. The Council has also benefited from Wesleyan University's involvement in the preschool initiative and noted that Wesleyan has developed an early childhood institute in mathematics and science. Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) provides numerous professional development opportunities in this area. In summary, Ms. Fahey cited high-quality programs, well-trained teachers and collaborative efforts with community agencies as the three essential components of a successful preschool initiative.

Hartford

"Preschool is a priority in Hartford," Superintendent of Schools Robert Henry asserted, "and our budget demonstrates this. \$6.7 million is allocated for Hartford Public Schools' preschool program, using multiple funding sources, and we currently serve 735 students, at a per pupil cost of \$8,900," he explained. In 1999 the Hartford Public Schools had six preschool classrooms; this past year, there were 36. Hartford uses multiple approaches to address the varying needs of its preschool students, such as exposure to age-appropriate technology, including science and math in the curriculum, intervention strategies for at-risk youngsters and early identification of gifted and talented students.

New Haven

Superintendent of Schools Reginald Mayo and Dr. Eleanor Osborne, Assistant Superintendent, said that New Haven's goal is to provide universal preschool to New Haven's children. The Head Start Program has been operating in New Haven since 1965; today the New Haven Public Schools oversees the implementation of both the federal and state Head Start grant programs, totaling approximately \$6.7 million. The program offers numerous services, including health, education, social services and parent programs and serves 925 New Haven children. Dr. Mayo argued that, "If we are to see any closing of the achievement gap, we need to focus on preschool education for 3- and 4-year-olds, and on the Birth-to-Three program for infants, toddlers and their families."

Dr. Osborne described a "huge difference" in the verbal skills of children who have had a preschool experience as opposed to those who had not. This speaks to the importance of dialogue in the development of a child's verbal skills. Qualified teachers, she added, are a "must" if a program is to be successful.

K-12 STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The Board adopted the K-12 Statewide Accountability System, in fulfillment of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* requirement that each state convert or integrate its accountability system to reflect the requirements of the federal legislation. The system will be applied to all public elementary, middle and high schools and districts. All public schools will be accountable for the performance of their students and student subgroups, including major racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, limited English-proficient students, and economically disadvantaged students. Adequate yearly progress (AYP) will be determined for all students and each subgroup, providing that it meets the minimum size requirement.

The reading and mathematics scores from the 2002-03 Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the 2001-02 Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) administrations were used to calculate the starting point for measuring whether AYP is made each subsequent year by all schools and subgroups within the schools. The standard to be applied is the percentage of students who score at or above the proficient level in mathematics and reading on the standard state assessments, with the goal of having 100 percent of all students in Grades 3-8 and Grade 10 reaching the proficient level by 2013-14.

Note: Connecticut's plan was approved by the United States Department of Education on June 10. A copy of the plan has been posted on the Department's website: www.state.ct.us.

PERSISTENTLY DANGEROUS SCHOOLS

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* requires each state receiving funds under the Act to establish and implement a statewide policy requiring that a student attending a persistently dangerous public elementary school or secondary school, as determined by the state in consultation with a representative sample of local education agencies, or who becomes a victim of a violent criminal offense*, as determined by state law, while in or on the grounds of a public elementary or secondary school that the student attends, be allowed to attend a safe public elementary or secondary school within the local education agency, including a public charter school.

The Board adopted the Department's proposed model for identifying persistently dangerous schools. Schools that meet the conditions of two of the following three categories of offenses, in each of three consecutive years, would be declared persistently dangerous:

- ✍ Two or more gun-free schools violations (possession of a firearm or explosive device that resulted in expulsion from school); or
- ✍ One "other weapon" incident resulting in expulsion per 200 students with a minimum of three such incidents; or
- ✍ One violent criminal offense resulting in expulsion per 200 students with a minimum of three such incidents.

(*A violent criminal offense is an incident in which a student or staff member suffers bodily injury as a result of intentional, knowing, or reckless acts committed by another person; and the police have been notified and a police report has been taken describing the incident; and the factual underpinnings contained in the police report are sufficient to constitute a crime described in the penal code, Title 53a of the Connecticut General Statutes.)

The policy also describes the steps in being designated as "persistently dangerous," beginning with a notification (if, in the course of one year, two of the three conditions above exist); warning status (if, for two consecutive years, two of the three conditions exist); and designation as "persistently dangerous" (if, for three consecutive years, two of the three conditions exist). Once designated as "persistently dangerous," the district must inform parents and offer them the opportunity to transfer their child to another public school within the district that is not "persistently dangerous" and complete the transfer for those requesting it. An annual progress report must be completed based on the implementation of its plan, approved by the local board of education and the Commissioner of Education.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT RESULTS

The Advanced Placement (AP) program, sponsored by The College Board, is an intensive program of college-level courses and examinations. The Commissioner and Department have encouraged all Connecticut districts and high schools to increase their participation in the AP program and other college credit programs. AP exams are offered worldwide in May. However, it is not necessary to be enrolled in an AP course in order to take an exam. Virtually all colleges have AP policies and 1,400 (including most in Connecticut) allow sophomore standing if sufficient AP credits have been earned.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (continued from page 3)

The Board reviewed a report on Connecticut's results on the May 2002 administration of the AP program. Highlights of the report follow.

- ✍ Connecticut ranked third nationally in participation of comprehensive high schools.
- ✍ Connecticut ranked third nationally, behind New Jersey and Illinois, in the average performance of public high school students.
- ✍ Connecticut students have had a consistently higher percentage of students with scores of three or better than students nationwide, since the data first became available in 1978-79.
- ✍ Connecticut nonpublic school students have scored slightly better than public school students since the reporting of these data began in 1983-84.
- ✍ Farmington High School, Conard High School and Hall High School (West Hartford), Litchfield High School and Staples High School (Westport), had the top participation rates among public schools.
- ✍ The number of public school test takers has almost tripled in the past 10 years, from 3,738 to 11,056.
- ✍ Since May 1997, the number of students taking an AP test has increased by 88 percent.

Commissioner Sergi commended several schools for high participation rates, AP program growth and AP emerging program growth.

POSITION STATEMENT ON EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The Board adopted the *Position Statement on Equal Educational Opportunity*. The Board defines equal educational opportunity as "student access to a level and quality of programs and experiences that provide each child with the means to achieve the standard of an educated citizen defined by *Connecticut's Common Core of Learning*. Evidence of equal educational opportunity is the participation and achievement of each student in challenging educational programs, regardless of factors such as family income, race, gender, or town of residence. The statement (copy attached) is intended to generate discussions about our collective obligation to provide equal educational opportunities to all students and how best to measure our success toward achieving this goal.

POSITION STATEMENT ON SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL SETTINGS

The Board adopted the *Position Statement on Supportive School Settings*. The Board developed this statement after reviewing research on the types of educational settings that are most conducive to students' success. The statement describes several variables that contribute to supportive school settings, including smaller learning environments that are staffed by highly qualified educators. These settings allow for consistent interaction between adults and students and greater individual attention and support for students. Other characteristics that contribute to success include smaller schools and classes, or educational settings in which leadership is distributed to smaller units within the school. The statement (copy attached) is intended to generate discussions at the local school board level about ways to create or modify school environments to enhance the amount of support each student receives.

DECISION REACHED ON PETITION FOR DECLARATORY RULING IN THE MATTER OF NONNEWAUG TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

In October 2002, the Nonnewaug Teachers' Association filed with the State Board of Education a Petition for Declaratory Ruling. The decision responds to the following questions:

- (1) *Is the Virtual Teacher Program (STEP) in violation of the certification requirements set forth in Section 10-145 of the Connecticut General Statutes?*
- (2) *Does the STEP program violate the requirements of Section 10-16b?*

Hearings on this matter were held on January 16 and February 19, 2003. The Board found that the STEP program is not in violation of the certification requirements set forth in Section 10-145 of the General Statutes in that the educators now assigned to specific program roles each possess the appropriate state educator certification and each acts within the legal scope of that authorization. The Board wrote, "We believe that the educator certification statutes should be interpreted with all due consideration to their primary reason for existence: that is, establishing minimum staff qualifications necessary to adequately address the needs of the student learner." The Board recognized the use of persons or instructional tools "other than the certified teacher" (tutors, mentors, volunteers,

PETITION FOR DECLARATORY RULING (continued)

student teachers, experts) and technology (computer-assisted instruction and distance learning) in meeting students' needs, and the potential need for a unique instructional model and nontraditional role for the certified teacher. "The primary interest in determining the use of instructional tools must be the thoughtful regard for the interests of the student learner," the Decision continued. Nonetheless, this nontraditional role would still include duly certified educational staff responsible for the overall design and oversight of instruction and the evaluation of students.

In response to the second question raised *sua sponte* by the State Board of Education, the Board wrote in its Decision:

We hold that the STEP program as operating today is in compliance with the requirements of section 10-16b of the General Statutes. There is sufficient evidence to establish that it is planned, ongoing and systematic as required by section 10-16b. This includes our expectation that there will be sufficient instructional involvement and oversight by an appropriately certified educator as affirmed by Region #14 administrators during their testimony.

The Board received *Profiles of Our Schools, Condition of Education in Connecticut 2001-2002*. The report is compiled every year in compliance with Section 10-4(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes. It contains statewide summary data as well as district and school details for the 2001-2002 school year. This year's report focuses on the indicators of progress in the Board's *Comprehensive Plan for Education* toward improving student achievement and reducing the gap in achievement among subgroups. The report will be disseminated statewide and is accessible via the Department's website.

RENEWAL OF CHARTER: AMISTAD ACADEMY, NEW HAVEN

The Board renewed the charter of Amistad Charter School for the period July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2009. Amistad Academy opened in 1999 and now serves 220 New Haven students in Grades 5-8. The school has three main goals: (1) achieve academic excellence; (2) develop public citizenship skills through the school's REACH values (respect, enthusiasm, achievement, citizenship and hard work); and (3) develop and share an instructional model that consistently produces dramatic growth. Amistad Academy students have made significant improvements in their performance on the Connecticut Mastery Tests.

NON-RENEWAL OF CHARTER: BROOKLAWN ACADEMY, FAIRFIELD

The Board voted not to renew the charter of Brooklawn Academy Charter School. The school will not operate beyond the end of this school year. Brooklawn opened in 1998 and this year served 69 Grade 6-8 students predominately from Bridgeport. The Board's decision was based on a history of problems concerning financial management, support for and implementation of the school's curricular goals, governance, certification of staff members, student achievement, administration, and support from board members and the public.

RENEWAL OF CHARTER: HIGHVILLE MUSTARD SEED CHARTER SCHOOL, HAMDEN

The Board renewed the charter of Highville Mustard Seed Charter School for the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2008. Highville Mustard Seed Charter School opened in 1998 and currently serves 300 prekindergarten through Grade 8 students predominantly from Hamden and New Haven. The school focuses on international studies across all curriculum areas by adopting the names, cultures and customs of countries in each classroom at all grade levels. Students also learn about the history and structure of the United Nations. The school works in concert with many community organizations to enhance the quality of instruction for students and support services for families.

CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT FOR THE 2003-2004 SCHOOL YEAR

The Board authorized a net increase of 62 seats for charter schools for the 2003-04 school year, for a total of 2,280 seats. This number represents 131 additional seats requested by seven schools, minus the 69 seats previously allocated to Brooklawn Academy. The Board's action is contingent on final approval of the state budget.

INTENT TO AMEND REGULATIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL NURSES

The Board declared its intent to amend the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies concerning school nurses. The proposed regulatory changes include the following: a requirement of a BSN within 10 years of employment as a school nurse; requirement of CPR certification; an increase in previous experience from one to two years prior to employment as a school nurse; an increase in the education requirement prior to employment from 12 to 15 credits if no baccalaureate; an increase in continuing education requirements from 10 hours every two years to 15 hours per year; and a grandfather clause to protect all nurses currently employed as school nurses who may or may not meet the requirements.

REVISED EXIT CRITERIA FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS

The Board approved two revisions to the Board's March 2001 action concerning the assessment and exit criteria for bilingual students. The first revision changes the exit criterion for students in Grades 3-12 in mandated bilingual programs from a score at the basic level in mathematics, reading and writing on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) to the proficient level for mathematics and reading for bilingual students in Grades 3-9, and maintaining the basic level for writing. This is consistent with the *No Child Left Behind Act* expectations for all students, including limited English proficient (LEP) students. Grade 10-12 bilingual students would have to meet an exit standard of the basic level or above on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). This higher exit standard would enable students in mandated bilingual programs to continue to receive English language instruction and support beyond 30 months in the bilingual program until they have demonstrated proficiency in mathematics and reading, and eliminates having two different sets of expectations for LEP students in bilingual programs and LEP students in English as a second language (ESL) or other language support programs.

The Board's action also changed the requirement that districts annually assess academic progress of bilingual students (using off-level CMTs) by allowing districts to use locally determined assessments to measure progress in Grades 3, 5 and 7 and in high school, and for exempt students in Grades 4, 6, 8 and 10, until such time as they are ready to exit the bilingual education program or language support services.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Board received a report describing bilingual education students and programs, including statutory requirements in place in 2001-2002. The report contains information on programs, staffing, student enrollment and student achievement, including attendance, participation rates in the CMT and CAPT, dropout data and graduation data.

Recommendations resulting from the report's findings include (1) institute bilingual education academies to upgrade teachers' skills; (2) require that the State Department of Education (SDE) continue to monitor staffing of programs for English language learners to ensure that districts provide assistance to all bilingual teachers and paraprofessionals to enable them to meet the requirements of "highly qualified staff," as defined in the NCLB Act; (3) SDE and local school districts should continue to develop and enhance student-level centralized data management systems to better monitor student progress within and across districts; (4) continue to monitor the impact of the mandated ESL program on high school students with less than 30 months to graduation; (5) districts should acquire current textbooks in the appropriate instructional language; (6) districts must continue to provide families with services that will increase their involvement in schools and help them support their children's educational efforts; (7) ensure that instruction in bilingual programs is aligned with district and state curriculum frameworks and CMT/CAPT standards; and (8) districts should continue to provide appropriate transition and follow-up services to students exiting programs; and, in an effort to meet the NCLB goal that 100 percent of English language learners meet proficiency standards on state tests by 2013-14, reexamine curriculum, instructional methodology and the quality of instruction.

RACIAL IMBALANCE REPORT

The Board accepted the Racial Imbalance Report, prepared in compliance with state statutes. The report revealed no additional districts with racially imbalanced schools beyond those cited in the past. The three schools that are racially imbalanced this year (Charter Oak School and Smith School in West Hartford, and Hamilton Avenue School in Greenwich) have been cited previously. The Greenwich Board of Education filed a plan to correct racial imbalance in December 2000, and improvements have been noted since the filing of its plan. The two West Hartford schools were found to be "unique" schools.

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), published by Celebration Press, has been required for the past three years in priority school districts and in those schools in which students are enrolled in bilingual education programs in Grades K-3. The Board adopted a "substantially deficient" standard in 2001. Students in priority school districts scoring at this level are provided additional instructional assistance until they achieve a satisfactory level of performance.

The standard also fulfills the requirements of Section 10-17c requiring the adoption of a state English mastery standard to assess the linguistic and academic progress of students in bilingual education programs in Grades K-3. In June 2003, the Board adopted an additional "proficiency" standard. This standard was set in response to the requirement of the *No Child Left Behind Act* that students be assessed to determine adequate yearly progress in the areas of mathematics and reading.

The CMT and CAPT will be used to satisfy this requirement. In schools in which the CMT and CAPT are not administered (e.g., K-2 schools), the DRA proficiency level will be used to satisfy the NCLB requirement.

The Board approved its Annual Audit Plan for the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. The majority of the Office of Internal Audit's time will continue to be spent in the areas of school construction and other grants, especially the Education Cost Sharing Grant. Time has also been allocated for federal/state single audit issues and the Regional Vocational-Technical Schools.

APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDS

The Board approved the following grant applications:

2003 Team Nutrition Training Grant (\$200,000) – funds would allow for training and technical assistance for child nutrition food service professionals and nutrition education for children. Funds would also support efforts to involve school and child-care administrators and other school and community partners in initiatives designed to promote healthy eating and physical activity.

Connecticut's Challenge for Community Service-Learning: 2003-2006 (\$215,584, fiscal year 2003-04) – funds will support Connecticut's continued participation in the federal Learn and Serve America K-12 School-based Program. Subgrants to local partnerships between school districts and community agencies will support programs that allow young people to volunteer their service to their communities, thereby developing good citizens and positive changes to the school and community.

Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Grant (\$2,000,000) – Funds will promote high-quality professional development programs to improve the knowledge and skills of early childhood educators who work in urban or rural high-poverty communities. The programs focus on early childhood pedagogy and the enhancement of children's language and literacy skills to better prepare students for reading instruction when they enter school.

Refugee Children School Impact Program (\$325,409) – funds would be used to support some of the costs of educating refugee children incurred by a local school district. The New Haven school district collaborated with the State Department of Education in the preparation of the proposal, and will share the grant award with Bridgeport and Hartford, the three cities with the greatest need for such support.

The Board ordered that the complaint filed pursuant to Section 10-4b of the Connecticut General Statutes against the New Britain Board of Education be dismissed. The Board's action was taken in response to the passage of a City Council resolution authorizing the additional appropriation to the local board of education to ensure that it meets the minimum expenditure requirement in 2002-03.

After consideration of the evidence, briefs and oral arguments In the Matter of Commissioner of Education and Joseph C. Daddio, the Board voted to accept and adopt the findings of fact and recommended decision and order of Hearing Officer Mary H.B. Gelfman and revoked the teaching certificate of Joseph C. Daddio.

APPROVAL OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The Board approved the following educator preparation programs for the purpose of certifying graduates:

- ✍ University of Connecticut – full program approval for the graduate preparation programs at the branch campuses in West Hartford and Stamford for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2008.
- ✍ University of Bridgeport – full program approval for the graduate programs preparing students in middle grades and secondary grades for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2006; and provisional approval for the graduate program in intermediate administration or supervision for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2006, with an interim report on the program due on November 15, 2003.
- ✍ University of New Haven -- full program approval for the graduate programs in elementary education, middle grades and secondary education for the period September 1, 2003, through August 31, 2006, with an interim report due February 15, 2004.
- ✍ Connecticut College – The Board extended program approval of the undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs to September 30, 2006, to allow the college time to “marshal the human resources needed to prepare for and host a program review process in 2005.”

APPOINTMENTS TO REVIEW COMMITTEE FOR THE APPROVAL OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The Board approved the appointments of the following individuals to serve on the Review Committee for the Approval of Educator Preparation Programs for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2006: Ellen V. Whitford, Yvonne J. Griffin, Patrick S. Chang and Thomas DeFranco. This 12-member committee, appointed by the State Board of Education, studies the higher education institution's self-examination report, the visiting team's report and the institution's response to the visiting team's report, and interviews representatives of the institution and the visiting team. Based upon its study and interviews, the Committee makes recommendations to the Commissioner of Education concerning the higher education institution.

The Board approved the American Association of Christian Schools as an accrediting agency for a 10 year period ending June 3, 2013. This action allows the Association to accredit private elementary and secondary schools in Connecticut.

The Board issued a one-year Certificate of Exemption to the Franklin Academy in East Haddam, through June 3, 2004. The Certificate of Exemption permits the operation of a nonspecial education residential facility and is not equivalent to school approval. It indicates that the school is “an education institution as determined by the Sate Board of Education, and that the licensing requirements for childcare facilities and child-placing agencies do not apply.” The certificate must be renewed annually.

The Board elected Janet M. Finneran as Vice Chairperson of the State Board of Education. According to the Board's Bylaws, the Vice Chairperson “shall act in the absence of the Chairperson at any meeting of the Board and shall assume such duties as may be delegated by the Chairperson.”

BEGINNING EDUCATOR SUPPORT AND TRAINING (BEST) PROGRAM PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

The Board approved recommendations concerning (1) the categories for beginning teachers first registered in the BEST Program along with corresponding certificates and endorsement areas and (2) standards of performance for beginning teachers on the BEST portfolio assessment.

RECOGNITION

The Board recognized the following individuals or groups for their significant accomplishments:

Student Members of the State Board of Education

Natalie Ivanoff of Seymour and **Derek Smitt of Meriden**, student members of the State Board of Education from July 2002 through June 2003. Ms. Ivanoff graduated from Emmett O'Brien Regional-Vocational Technical School and will attend Southern Connecticut State University this fall. Mr. Smitt graduated from O.H. Platt High School in Meriden and will attend George Washington University in September. Chairman Toensing stated, "Natalie and Derek have contributed greatly during their terms on the Board, and we wish them well in their future endeavors."

Award for Outstanding Support for Early Language Learning

- ✍ **Dr. Mary Ann Hansen, a consultant in the Department of Education**, for receiving the Award for Outstanding Support for Early Language Learning, given by the National Network for Early Language Learning.

Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program Teachers-in-Residence

- ✍ **Kitsia Hughey Ferguson, an English language arts teacher in the Hamden Public Schools**, a teacher-in-residence for the BEST Program, 2000-2003;
- ✍ **Michele M. Johnson, a special education teacher in the Bolton Public Schools**, a teacher-in-residence for the BEST Program, 2001-2003;
- ✍ **Julia R. Sherman, a science teacher in Regional School District #19**, a teacher-in-residence for the BEST Program, 2001-2003; and
- ✍ **Ellen Maichack-Snow, an elementary education teacher in the West Hartford Public Schools**, a teacher-in-residence for the BEST Program, 2001-2003.

Career and Technical Organizations

- ✍ **The Distributive Education Club of America (DECA) chapter of Windham High School**, a recipient of a DECA outstanding community service award, in recognition of its "Stop the Violence" project;
- ✍ **The Distributive Education Club of America (DECA) chapter of Bristol Central High School**, a recipient of the DECA outstanding community service award, in recognition of its "Stop the Violence" project;
- ✍ **The Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter of Shelton High School**, a recipient of the FBLA outstanding community service award, in recognition of its "Stop the Violence" project;
- ✍ **The Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter of Nonnewaug High School**, the recipient of the FFA outstanding community service award, in recognition of its "Stop the Violence" project; and
- ✍ **The Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter of Nonnewaug High School**, a recipient of the FBLA outstanding community service award, in recognition of its "Stop the Violence" project.

General Educational Development (GED) Scholar

- ✍ **Jennifer H. Oliveri of Wethersfield**, the highest scorer in Connecticut on the 2002 administration of the GED.

CHANGES TO THE NONPUBLIC SCHOOL VOLUNTARY APPROVAL PROCESS

The Board repealed guidelines and procedures adopted in 1978 that governed the voluntary approval of nonpublic schools in Connecticut. The Board's June 4 action requires that nonpublic schools seeking state approval receive it by becoming accredited by an agency approved by the State Department of Education. The Department will approve accrediting agencies based on standards adopted by the State Board of Education. The Board's action, in effect, eliminates the Advisory Council for School Approval and the Department's role in reviewing applications, making site visits and recommending to the Advisory Council approval or disapproval. Commissioner Sergi made

this recommendation to the Board in consideration of how best to use scarce state resources. Agencies currently approved as accrediting agencies include the Norwich Diocesan School Office (through June 2003), The Association of Christian Schools International (through March 2009), New England Association of Schools and Colleges (through March 2013), Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (through March 2013), and American Association of Christian Schools (through June 2013).

REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS (RESCs)

Approval of ACES and CES

The Board granted continued approval to Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) and Cooperative Education Services (CES) for the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2008. The Board is required to evaluate the programs and services provided by each regional educational service center for the purpose of its continued approval, pursuant to Section 10-66a of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Board found that both ACES and CES continue to meet many educational needs within their respective regions.

Use of Funds

State statute requires that the State Board of Education designate the use of at least 6¼ percent of the RESCs' annual funds. The Board directed that such funds in 2003-04 be used to provide regional interdistrict activities that reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation.

REPORT ON HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Commissioner Sergi summarized a progress report on achievements and continuing needs of the Hartford Public Schools, prepared in accordance with state statute. Commissioner Sergi reported on a multifaceted approach to improving student achievement, providing professional development for administrators and staff members and ensuring overall school improvement. More than one-third of Hartford's elementary schools have completed the self-study process of accreditation through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Choice options will expand from 11 to 17 Hartford schools in September 2003. Further, plans are underway to improve school facilities at Hartford Public High School; Rawson, Burr, Naylor and Webster elementary schools; and at new host magnet schools. The school system has shown improvement on most performance indicators since 1997, the first year of the state intervention. The report speaks of the importance of the school system's careful analysis of achievement results as it addresses the limited gains made, and how best to ensure that all students achieve at high levels.

The report cites as the most pressing issue for the Mayor, City Council, Governor and legislative leadership whether the Hartford Public Schools can continue to make progress with a proposed 2003-04 budget that apparently is less than the 2002-03 budget. Also of concern is the system's ability to meet new financial commitments to renovate existing school facilities and buildings and to provide additional magnet school options for Hartford students. In his closing remarks, Commissioner Sergi urged state and local officials to provide Hartford with resources for the further improvement of its public schools, and called on the Hartford Board of Education to remain focused on the need for continuous improvement in student achievement.

STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Board received the annual report from the State Advisory Council on Special Education (SAC). The Council is an advisory group of parents and professionals who meet to examine and discuss issues related to the special education needs of Connecticut's children. The Council's function is to review laws, regulations and guidelines pertaining to special education and to advise the General Assembly, State Department of Education, and State Board of Education. Dr. James Granfield, Chairperson of SAC, reported on the Council's activities during the past year and cited as SAC priorities (1) literacy beyond Grade 3; (2) increasing SAC visibility across the state; (3) influencing state policy; (4) teacher quality and teacher certification; and (5) best practices drawn from state, national and international perspectives.

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SYSTEM (RVTSS)

Recognition-SkillsUSA-VICA Competition 2002

The Board honored the following individuals for their success in the SkillsUSA-VICA 2002 National Competition:

- ✍ **Tom Kendall**, 2002 graduate of Henry Abbott Regional Vocational-Technical School, who placed 2nd in Precision Machining;
- ✍ **Ryan Gawel**, 2002 graduate of H.C. Wilcox Regional Vocational-Technical School, who placed 5th in Residential Wiring;
- ✍ **Derek Seiple**, 2003 graduate of W.F. Kaynor Regional Vocational-Technical School, who placed 7th in Technical Drafting;
- ✍ **Raymond Steele**, 2002 graduate of Vinal Regional Vocational-Technical School, who placed 8th in Robotics and Automation Technology;
- ✍ **Jacob Kirk**, 2002 graduate of Vinal Regional Vocational-Technical School, who placed 8th in Robotics and Automation Technology;
- ✍ **Natalie Ivanoff**, 2003 graduate of Emmett O'Brien Regional Vocational-Technical School, who placed 9th in Prepared Speech; and
- ✍ **Jonathan Peabody**, 2002 graduate of H.H. Ellis Regional Vocational-Technical School, who placed 10th in Masonry.

Blue Chip Grant

Superintendent Spera informed the Board that the RVTSS received a Blue Chip grant from the State Department of Education. J.M. Wright Regional Vocational-Technical School will receive \$120,000 in Title II-D funds to expand its digital classroom to a whole-school model through June 2004.

Policy Regarding the Pledge of Allegiance

In compliance with Public Act 02-119, the Board adopted a Policy Regarding the Pledge of Allegiance. The policy provides that time be available each school day for students in the school to recite the "Pledge of Allegiance," but does not require students to recite the Pledge.

School Construction

Two school construction projects were approved: (1) Emmett O'Brien Regional Vocational-Technical School in Ansonia, \$40,625,000; and (2) H.C. Wilcox Regional Vocational-Technical School in Meriden, \$47,013,000. The two proposals will be included on the school construction priority list (2003-04). The funds would be used to expand and renovate existing facilities.

Student Achievement Goals

The Board adopted specific student achievement goals for several academic and trade/technology areas. This action was taken in response to a December 2000 recommendation made by the Program Review and Investigations Committee of the General Assembly. Each school is revising its school improvement plan to refine the specific goals for student performance on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test and on trade assessments. The achievement goals align with industry, national and state standards and assessments and Connecticut's curriculum frameworks.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(effective July 1, 2002)

| ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE | STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS |
|---|--|
| Address: 165 Capitol Ave. Room 301 Hartford, CT 06106 | <i>Craig E. Toensing, Chairperson</i> <i>Janet M. Finneran, Vice Chairperson</i> <i>Amparo Adib-Samii</i> <i>Donald J. Coolican</i> <i>Natalie L. Ivanoff</i> <i>Patricia B. Luke</i> <i>Terri L. Masters</i> <i>Timothy J. McDonald</i> <i>Derek Smitt</i> <i>Allan B. Taylor</i> <i>Annika L. Warren</i> |
| Telephone: (860) 713-6510 | |
| Facsimile: (860) 713-7002 | |
| E-Mail: pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us | <i>Theodore S. Sergi, Secretary</i> <i>Valerie Lewis, ex officio</i> |
| To obtain a copy of a report considered by the Board, please contact the Office of Public Information, 860-713-6526. | |

NOTE: The next regular meeting of the State Board of Education will be Wednesday, September 10, 2003. The meeting will be held in Room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut. Visitors are advised to call the Office of Board Matters (860-713-6510) to confirm the meeting date and time.

The Board Report is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>). It provides a summary of matters considered by the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meetings. The Department welcomes comments and suggestions concerning the format and content of ***The Board Report***. Please submit your comments to Pamela V. Bergin, Office of the State Board of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 301, Hartford, CT 06106, or pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us.

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Equal Educational Opportunity

Adopted May 7, 2003

The Board's definition of equal educational opportunity is student access to a level and quality of programs and experiences that provide each child with the means to achieve the standard of an educated citizen defined by Connecticut's Common Core of Learning. Evidence of equal educational opportunity is the participation and achievement of each student in challenging educational programs, regardless of factors such as family income, race, gender, or town of residence.

Every Connecticut public school student is entitled to participate in a high-quality educational program. Such a program is characterized by effective teachers and administrators who have high expectations for student achievement. It also has sound facilities, safe environments, appropriate resources that equitably meet the educational needs of the student population, a rigorous curriculum, and opportunities for students to learn with and from students and teachers whose backgrounds differ from their own. All Connecticut citizens, and the state and local governments that serve them, are responsible for ensuring that all students are provided with an education that supports their achievement and, ultimately, their success in and contributions to society. The State Board of Education, having statutory responsibility for providing general supervision, leadership and control of the educational interests of the state, will continue to lead this effort by developing supportive policies, programs and proposals, and providing direction and assistance to local school districts.

There are five state statutory goals for the State Board of Education:

- to achieve resource equity and equality of opportunity;
- to increase student achievement;
- to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation;
- to improve effective instruction; and
- to encourage parental and community involvement in all public schools of the state.

These goals are consistent with the Board's long-standing commitment to equal opportunity and high standards for all Connecticut students. They are also consistent with Section 10-4a of the Connecticut General Statutes, which defines the "educational interests of the state" to include that each child shall have an equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences; that each school district shall finance at a reasonable level at least equal to the minimum expenditure requirement an educational program to achieve that end; that, in order to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation, each school district shall provide educational opportunities for its students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds and may provide such opportunities with students from other communities; and that the mandates in the general statutes pertaining to education within the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education be implemented.

(continued)

The Board's vision of public education for the beginning of the new century, articulated in *Greater Expectations: Connecticut's Comprehensive Plan for Education, 2001-2005*, revised January 2003, provides context and direction for meeting these responsibilities. Connecticut's commitment over the last two decades to high expectations, high standards and hard work has yielded positive, incremental growth in student achievement from 1990 to the present and a small closing of the gap between the performance of urban and suburban students over the last several years. But much remains to be done. The Board will continue to work toward ensuring a high-quality teaching and administrative force; providing universal access to high-quality preschool; involving more parents and families in the education of their children; increasing the state share of revenues, particularly to those towns with students most in need; and funding urban interdistrict magnet schools that promote the participation of suburban students.

Every local school district and school should be measuring its success in providing equal educational opportunity by improved student achievements, the reduction of achievement gaps and its ability to connect with every student.

The result of greater equality of educational opportunity in Connecticut will be that all public school graduates *"can read, write, compute, think creatively, solve problems, and use technology. All students should enjoy and perform in the arts and athletics, and understand history, science and other cultures and languages. Each student must be responsible for his or her learning and behavior, work well with and be helpful to others, and contribute to the community. Every student must graduate from high school and be prepared to move on to productive work and further study and to function in the global economy. Ultimately, students must become active citizens and lifelong learners who lead healthy lives."* (State Board of Education Position Statement on Measuring Success/Defining a Successful Student, adopted September 2000).

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Supportive School Settings

Adopted May 7, 2003

The State Board of Education believes that educators and local school board members must demonstrate leadership in seeking ways to continuously improve student achievement and close the achievement gaps. One source of improved student achievement, supported by the most current research, is more personal school settings that are staffed by highly qualified educators. These settings — including classes, programs and schools - are designed to ensure frequent, consistent student-teacher interaction. Such environments allow for greater individual attention and support for every student, thereby ensuring that each student has a strong connection on a regular basis with at least one adult in the building, and that no student "falls through the cracks."

Although the size of a school building and its total enrollment alone do not necessarily determine a corresponding level of academic achievement and student success, several studies indicate that students in smaller and more personal school settings often outperform students in larger schools on most measures of achievement and perform equally to them on others. Of particular interest in terms of our goal of closing the gaps among and within our public schools is research that indicates that smaller, more personal school settings and reduced class size have a mitigating effect on social and economic factors typically associated with poor performance. This is especially true in impoverished rural and urban districts and districts with mixed socioeconomic groups. The real key in this equation is that such settings allow and foster increased individual attention and support for every student. Smaller, more personal school settings are directly correlated with higher attendance rates, lower dropout rates, a safer and more orderly school climate, and greater parental, student and community communication, involvement and satisfaction. While there is some debate about the cost-effectiveness of small schools, one could argue that the investment is worthwhile given these positive results, and that cost-effectiveness should include measures such as student achievement and graduates' contributions to society.

The State Board of Education encourages local school boards and citizens to refer to research findings when planning school facilities. However, communities and districts need not wait for a school construction project to implement the successful components of more individualized schools settings. The Board urges school districts to study the factors that contribute to a school's success and seek creative ways to incorporate those or comparable practices into existing school buildings. These include changing a school's administrative structure to distribute leadership and decision making to smaller units within the school (e.g., house plans, teacher teams, school within a school) and to enhance communication among teachers, administrators, students and parents; reducing class size; and employing effective "personalization" practices (e.g., teacher advisory systems, looping, student teams, mentoring programs.)

Local board of education members, educators and parents must engage in thoughtful discussions and planning activities that will result in creating or modifying school environments in ways that will contribute to each student's success and ensure a collective responsibility for individual students. The structure and atmosphere of more personal school settings, as well as approaches to facilitating communication within schools, provide us with several models to study and emulate. These efforts will enable us to meet the needs of more students and families and enhance student achievement.